

# Spiritual Direction for Today:

## Moving Forward When Culture Pulls You Back

Have you ever found yourself longing for the "good old days"? Maybe you've caught yourself wishing you could return to a simpler time before the responsibilities and challenges of your current life. While nostalgia can be comforting, there's a danger in constantly looking backward. In fact, the Bible gives us a stark warning about this very thing.

## Remember Lot's Wife

In Genesis 19, we find the story of Lot and his family fleeing from the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. As they escape God's judgment on these sinful places, they receive a clear instruction: "Escape for your life. Do not look behind you, nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed" (Genesis 19:17).

Even though she had been warned not to, Lot's wife couldn't resist one last look. The result? "But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt" (Genesis 19:26).

This consequence may seem harsh, but Jesus Himself emphasizes the importance of this lesson. In Luke 17:32, He says simply, "Remember Lot's wife." It's one of the shortest verses in the Bible, but it packs a powerful punch.

## The Danger of Looking Back

Why is this story so significant? Pastor Campbell explains:

"Lot's wife is a warning to all believers not to love the world or to form unhealthy relationships to it. ... Her life stands as a monument to the consequences of hesitating and disobeying the instructions of the Lord."

When we constantly look back, we risk several spiritual dangers:

1. Losing sight of God's future for us
2. Romanticizing our past, even the sinful parts

### 3. Becoming stuck and unable to move forward in faith

## The Pull of Worldliness

It's not just about literally looking backward. Even after being freed from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites found themselves longing for aspects of their old life:

"We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" (Numbers 11:5-6)

They had forgotten the oppression and bondage, focusing only on the temporary pleasures they once enjoyed. Pastor Campbell notes, "Getting God's people out of Egypt might be easier than getting Egypt out of God's people."

A pull toward worldliness is still a struggle for believers today. We're constantly surrounded by messages telling us to prioritize comfort, pleasure, and self-fulfillment above all else. But as Christians, we're called to a different standard.

## Living with Conviction

Because of Lot's wife, we know there are consequences for looking back to the life we once lived. So, how can we avoid looking back? What can we do to embrace God's future for us? Here are some key principles:

- 1. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus:** We must focus on following Him, not on what you're leaving behind.
- 2. Cultivate an eternal perspective:** Remember that this world is temporary, and our true home is with God.
- 3. Be willing to stand out:** Don't compromise your convictions to fit in with the world.
- 4. Pursue holiness:** As Pastor Campbell says, "People don't drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people don't gravitate towards godliness, prayer, obedience to the Scripture, faith, and delighting themselves in the Lord."

5. **Get out of the boat:** Don't play it safe with your faith. Be willing to step out in obedience, even when it's uncomfortable.

## Putting It Into Practice

Here are some practical steps you can take to apply these principles in your daily life:

1. Start each day by recommitting to following Jesus, no matter what challenges you may face.
2. When tempted to compromise, remind yourself of Lot's wife and the consequences of looking back.
3. Find an accountability partner. Choose someone more mature in their faith who can inspire you to stay focused on God's calling for your life.
4. Look for chances to share your faith boldly, even in challenging situations.
5. Regularly evaluate your priorities and activities. Are they drawing you closer to God or pulling you toward worldliness?

Remember, as Pastor Campbell emphasizes, "God is far more concerned about your character than He is your comfort." By keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus and moving forward in faith, we can avoid the pitfalls of looking back--experiencing the fullness of life God has for us.